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HISTORY

OF

THOMAS HICKATHRIFT.



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THE
HISTORY
OF
Thomas Hickathrift.

*He that does buy this little Book,
Observe what you in it do look,
When you have read it, then may say,
Your money is not thrown away.*

CHAP. I.

Of his Birth, Parentage, and Education.

IN the reign before William the conqueror, I have heard in ancient history that there dwelt a man in the parish of the Isle of Ely, in the coun-

ty of Cambside, whose name was Thomas Hickathrift, a poor man and a day labourer, yet he was a very stout man, and able to perform two days work instead of one: He having one son, and no more children in the world, he called him by his own name, Thomas Hickathrift, This old man put his son to good learning, but he would take none, for he was as we call them in this age, none of the wisest sort, but something less, and had no docility at all in him.

His father being soon called out of the world, his mother was tender of him, maintained him by her hand-labour as well as she could; he being slothful, and not willing to work to get a penny for his living, but all his delight was to be in the chimney corner, and would eat as much at one time as would serve four or five men; for he was in height, when he was

but ten years of age, about eight feet and in thickness five feet, and his hand was like unto a shoulder of mutton; and in all his parts from top to toe, he was like unto a monster, and yet his great strength was not known.

CHAP. 11

How Thomas Hickathrift Strength came to be known.

THE first time that his strength was known, was by his mother going to a rich farmer's house (she being but a poor woman) to desire a butt of straw to shift herself and her son Thomas. The farmer being a very honest, charitable man, bid her take what she would. She going home to her son Tom, said, I pray go to such a place and fetch me a butt of straw, I have asked him leave. He swore

He would not go: nay, pray thee, Tom go, said his old mother. He swore again he would not go, unless she would barrow him a cart rope. She being willing to please him, went and borrowed him a cart rope to his desire.

He taking it went his way; coming to the farmer's house, the master was in the barn, and two men threshing. Said Tom, I am come for a buttle of straw. Tom, said the master, take as much as thou canst carry. He laid down the cart rope, and began to make his buttle; said they, Tom thy rope is to short, and jeer'd poor Tom, but he fitted the man well for it: for he made his buttle, and when he had finished it, there was supposed to be a load of straw in it, of two thousand weight, Said they, what a great fool art thou, thou canst not carry the tenth of it? Tom took the buttle and

flung it over his shoulder, and made no more of it than we do of an hundred weight, to the great admiration of master and men.

Tom Hickathrift's strength being then known in the town, they would no longer let him lie baking by the fire in the chimney corner, every one would be hiring him to work ; they seeing him to have so much strength, told him that it was a shame for him to live such a lazy course of life, and to lie idle day after day, as he did.

Tom seeing them bait him in a manner as they did, went first to one work then to another ; but at length came a man who would hire him to go to the wood ; for he had a tree to bring home, and he would content him. Tom went with him, and he took with him four men besides ; but when they came to the wood, they set the cart on the tree, and began to

draw it up with pulleys; Tom seeing them not able to stir it, said, stand away, ye fools, then takes it up and sets it on one end, and lays it on the cart; Now, says he, see what a man can do. Merry is it true, said they. When they had done, as they came through the wood they met the wood-man, Tom asked him for a stick to make his mother a fire with. Aye, says the wood-man, take one that thou canst carry. Tom espyed a tree bigger than the one that was in the cart, and lays it on his shoulder, and goes home with it as fast as the cart and six horses could draw it. This was the second time that Tom's strength was known.

When Tom began to know that he had more strength than twenty men, he then began to be merry and very tractable, and would run, or jump, took great delight to be amongst com-

pany, and to go to fairs and meetings to see sports and pastimes

Going to a feast, the young men were all met, some to cudgels, some to wrestling, some throwing the hammer and the like; Tom stood a while to see the sport, and at last goes to them that were throwing the hammer; and standing a little to see their man-like sport, at last he takes the hammer in his hand to feel the weight of it, and bid them stand out of the way, for he would throw it as far as he could. Aye, said the smith and jeered poor Tom, you'll throw it a great way I'll warrant you; Tom took the hammer in his hand and flung it; and their was a river about five or six furlongs off, and flung it into that: When he had done, he bid the smith fetch the hammer again, and laughed the smith to scorn.

When Tom had done this exploit, he would go to wrestling, tho' he had

no more skill of it than an ass, but what he had by strength; yet he flung all that came to oppose him, for if once he laid hold of them, they were gone. Some he would throw over his head, some he would lay down silly, and how he pleased; he would not like to strike at their heels, but flung them two or three yards from him, ready to break their necks asunder; so that none at last durst go into the ring to wrestle with him, for they took him to be some devil that was come among them; so Tom's fame soon spread more and more in the country.

CHAP. III.

How Tom came to be a Brewer's man; and how he came to kill a Giant, and at last was Mr Hickathrift.

Tom's fame being spread abroad both far and near, there was not a

man durst give him an angry word for he was something fool-hardy, and did not care what he did unto them ; so that all them who knew him would not in the least displease him. At length there was a Brewer at Lynn, who wanted a good lusty man to carry his beer to the marsh, and to Wisbech ; hearing of Tom, went to hire him, but Tom seemed coy, and would not be his man, until his mother and friends persuaded him, and his master intreated him ; likewise promised him that he should have a new suit of clothes and every thing answerable from top to toe ; besides he should eat and drink of the best. Tom at last yielded to be his man, and his master told him how far he must go ; for you must understand there was a monstrous giant, who kept some part of the marsh, and durst not go that way : for if they did, he would keep them, or kill them ; or

else he would make bond slaves of them.

But to come to Tom and his master, he did more work in one day, than all his men could do in three ; so that his master seeing him very tractable, and to look so well after his business, made him his head man to go into the marsh, to carry beer by himself, for he needed no man with him. Tom went every day in the week to Wisbech, which was a very good journey, and it was twenty miles the road way.

Tom going so long that wearisome journey and finding that way which the giant kept was nearer by half, and Tom before by being so well kept, and drinking so much strong ale as he did one day he was going to Wisbech, and without saying any thing to his master, or to any of his fellow servant he was resolved to take the nearest way to the wood ; or lose his life to win the

horse, or lose the saddle, to kill or be killed, if he met with the giant ; and with this resolution he goes the nearest way with his cart and horses to go to Wisbech, but the giant perceiving him, and seeing him to be so bold, thought to prevent him, and came intending to take his cart from him.

The giant met Tom like a lion, as thought he would have swallowed him up at a mouthful ; Sirrah, says he, who gave you authority to come this way ? Do you not know that I make all stand in fear of my sight, and you like an impudent rogue must come and fling open my gates at your pleasure ! How dare you presume to do this ? Are you so careless of your life ? I will make thee an example for all rogues under the sun ; dost thou not care what thou dost ; And do you not see how many heads hang upon yonder tree that have offended me ! But thy head shall hang

higher than all the rest for an example.

Tom made answer, A turd in your teeth for your news, for you shall not find me like one of them. No, said the giant, why? Thou art but a fool if thou comest to fight with such a one as I am, and bring no weapon to defend thyself withal. Said Tom, I have a weapon here will make you understand you are a traitorily rogue. Aye sirrah said the Giant, and took that word in high disdain, that Tom should call him a traitorily rogue, and with that he ran into his cave to fetch his club, intending to dash out Tom's brains at the first blow.

Tom knew not what to do for a weapon, for he knew his whip would do but little good against such a monstrous beast as he was, for he was in height about twelve feet, and six feet about the waist; but while the Giant went for his club, Tom bethought himself of

two very good weapons, for he makes no more ado, but takes out the axle-tree, and a wheel for his shield and buckler; and very good weapons they were, especially in time of need.

The Giant coming out again, began to stare at Tom, to see him take the wheel in one hand and axle-tree in the other to defend himself with. O! said the Giant, you are like to do great service with these weapons; I have here a twig that will beat thee and thy wheel and axle-tree to the ground; that which the Giant called a twig was as thick as some mill-posts are, but Tom was not daunted for all his big and threatening speeches, for he saw perfectly there was no way except one, which was, to kill or be killed; so the Giant made at Tom with such a vehement force, that he made Tom's wheel crack again, and Tom lent the Giant as good, for he gave him such a weighty

blow on the side of his head, that made the Giant reel again. What, said Tom are you drunk with my strong beer already.

The Giant recovering laid on Tom most sad blows ; but still as they came, Tom kept them off with his wheel, so that he had no hurt at all : In short, Tom plied his work so well, and laid such huge blows on the Giant, that sweat and blood together ran down his face and being fat and foggy, with fighting so long, he was almost tired out, and asked Tom to let him drink a little water, and then he would fight with him again. No, said Tom, my mother did not teach me that wit ; who would be the fool then ? Tom finding the Giant began to weary, and that he failed in his blows, thought it was best to make hay while the sun did shine, for he laid on so fast as though he was mad, till he brought the Giant down

to the ground. The Giant seeing himself down, and Tom laying so hard on him, made him roar in a most lamentable manner, and prayed for him not to take away his life, and he would do any thing for him, and yield himself to him and be his servant ; but Tom having no more mercy on him than a dog or bear, laid still at the Giant, 'till he laid him for dead and when he had done he cut off his head and went into the cave, where he found a great store of silver and gold which made his heart to leap.

Now having done this action, killing the Giant he put his cart together again, loaded it and drove it to Wisbech and delivered his beer ; and coming home to his master, he told it to him ; his master was so overjoyed at the news, that he would not believe him till he had seen ; and getting up the next day, he and his master went to

see if he spoke truth or not together with most of the town of Lynn. When they came to the place and found the Giant dead, he then shewed the place where his head was, and what silver and gold there was in the cave, all of them leaped for joy, for this monster was a great enemy to all the country.

This news was spread all up and down the country how Tom Hickathrift had killed the Giant, and well was he that could run or go to see the Giant and the cave; then all the folks made bonfires for joy; and Tom was a better respected man than before.

Tom took possession of the giant's cave by consent of the whole company, and every one said he was deserving twice as much more; Tom pulled down the cave, built him a fine house where the cave stood; and the ground that the giant kept by force and strength, some of which he gave to the

poor for their common, the rest he made pastures of and divided the most part into tillage, to maintain him and his mother, Jane Hickathrift.

Tom's fame was spread both far and near through the country ; and it was no longer Tom, but Mr. Hickathrift ; so that he was now the chiefeſt man among them ; for the people feared Tom's anger as much as they did the giant before. Tom kept men and maid servants, and lived most bravely ; he made a park to keep deer in ; near to his house he built a church and gave it the name of St. James's church, because he killed the giant on that day, which is so called to this hour ; He did many more good deeds, and became a public benefactor to all persons that lived near him.

CHAP. IV.

How Tom kept a pack of Hounds : His Kicking a Foot-ball quite away ; Also how he had like to have been robbed by Four Thieves, and how he Escaped.

TOM having got so much money

about him, and not being used to it ; could hardly tell how to dispose of it, but yet he did use means to do it ; for he kept a pack of hounds, and men to hunt with him ; and who but Tom then. So he took such delight in sports, that he would go far and near to meetings, as cudgel-play, bear-baiting, foot-ball, and the like.

Now Tom was riding one day, he lighted off his horse to see the sport, for they were playing for a wager ; Tom was a stranger and none did know him there ; but Tom soon spoiled their sport; for he meeting the foot-ball, took it such a kick that they never found their ball more ; they could see it fly, but whither none could tell ; they all wondered at it, and began to quarrel with Tom, but some of them got nothing by it, for Tom got a spar which belonged to a house that was blown down, and all that stood in his way he knocked down, so that all the country was up in arms to take Tom, but all in vain, for he manfully made way wherever he came.

Groot Van Zuiden.

When he was going from them, and returning homewards, he chanced to be somewhat late in the evening; on the road, he met four stout lusty rogues that had been robbing passengers that way, and none could escape them, for they robbed all they met with, both rich and poor. They thought when they met with Tom he would be a good prize for them, perceiving that he was alone, made cocksure of his money, but they were mistaken for he got a prize of them. Whereupon meeting with him, they bid him stand and deliver. What, shall I deliver? said Tom, Your money, sirrah, said they. But, said Tom, you will give me better words for it, and you must be better armed. Come, come, said they, we do not come here to prate, but we come for money, and money we will have, before you stir from this place. Aye, said Tom, is it so, nay then get it, and take it.

So one of them made at him, but he presently disarmed him, and took away his sword, which was made of good

rusty steel, and smote so hard at the others, that they began to put spurs to their horses and begone, but he soon stayed their journey, for one of them having a portmanteau behind him Tom supposing there was money in it, fought with a great deal more courage than before, till at last he killed two of the four, and the other two he wounded very sore, so that they cried out for quarter, and with much ado he gave them their lives, but took all their money, which was about two hundred pounds, to bear his expenses home. Now when Tom caine home, he told them how he had served the four highwaymen, which caused a laughter from his old mother, then refreshing himself, went to see how all things were, and what his men had done since he went from home.

Then going up into his forest, he walked up and down, and at last met with a lusty Tinker, that had a good staff on his shoulder, and a great dog to carry his leather bag and tools to work. Tom asked the tinker whence

he came and whither he was going for that was no highway. But the tinker being a sturdy fellow, bid him go look, what was that to him, for fools would be meddling. No, says Tom, but I'll make you know before you and I part, it is to me. Aye, says the tinker, I have been these three years and have had no combat with any man, and none durst make me answer; I think they be all cowards in this country except it be a man called Tom Hickathrift who killed a giant, him I would fain see to have a combat with him. Aye, said Tom, but methinks I might be master in your mouth; I am the man, what have you to say to me? Why, said the tinker, verily I am glad we have met so happily together, that we may have one single combat. Sure, said Tom, you do but jest. Merry, said the tinker, I am in earnest. A match, said Tom, will you give me leave to get a twig. Aye, says the tinker, I scorn to fight a man unarmed.

Tom steps to the gate, and takes one

of the rails for his staff; so they fell to work, the Tinker at Tom, and Tom at the Tinker, like unto two giants they laid the one on the other. The Tinker had on a leather coat, and at every blow Tom gave the Tinker, his coat cracked again, yet the Tinker did not give way to Tom an inch; But Tom gave the Tinker a blow on the side of the head, which felled the Tinker to the ground. Now, Tinker, where are you now, said Tom.

But the Tinker being a man of mettle, leaped up again, and gave Tom a blow which made him reel again, and followed his blows, and then took Tom on the other side which made his neck crack again. Tom flung down the weapon, and yielded the Tinker to be the best man, and took him home to his house where I shall leave Tom and the Tinker till they be recovered of their many wounds and bruises; which relation is more enlarged in, as you may read in the second part of Thomas Hickathrift.

FINIS.